
Tire-to-energy plant gains traction with talk on plans.

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A proposed tire-to-energy plant on the southern part of the former International Paper Co.. property will get a public airing tonight.

The public informational meeting is scheduled for 6:30 to 8 p.m.. at the East High School, auditorium, 1001 Atkins St.

Erie Renewable Energy LLC, which is undertaking the estimated \$100 million project, will give an overview of the plans and take questions.

The company hopes to start building in June 2008 and be in operation by summer 2009.. The project will create about 200 construction jobs and the plant will employ about 60 full-time workers.

The company has an option with Greater Erie Industrial Development Corp. to buy 67 acres of the former IP site, said Erie lawyer David Agresti, the managing partner of the local investor group involved in the project.

The majority partner is Caletta Renewable Energy of Boston, a developer of alternative-energy plants.

The property is on the south side of East Lake Road on land known as the Dunn Brickyard and the South Yard.. If the purchase goes through, the company will buy all 22 acres of the Dunn Brickyard and 45 of the 60 acres of the South Yard, Agresti said.

Once in operation, the plant will use 800 tons of tires daily to produce 70 megawatts of electricity, or enough to power 50,000 homes.

Agresti said the tires will be stacked indoors and shredded shortly after they arrived at the plant.

"The chances of you seeing it from the road, or a neighbor seeing a stack of tires, that's not going to happen," he said.. The only time that people will see tires outside the plant is when they are being removed from railcars or trucks, he said.

The company also will want to avoid the threat of smoky tire fires, he said.. And outdoor tire piles are breeding grounds for mosquitoes, which can carry the West Nile virus, he said.

The company is negotiating with Waste Management to get the tires, which also will free up landfill space, Agresti said.

Pennsylvania now has no tire-to-energy plants, but the innovative technology is not new.

The Erie plant will generate electricity by using fluidized-bed technology to convert tire chips at high temperatures into gas to create steam that will drive steam engines.

Vic Gatto, a Caletta principal and project manager, has said the company will convert tires to "mostly gaseous elements.

"You're not seeing black smoke because it's not being burned.. It's being gasified," he said in a prior interview.

Energy Products of Idaho, the preferred supplier for the technology, has more than 90 fluidized bed installations worldwide, and it has complied with some of the most stringent air-quality rules in the nation, Gatto has said.

Erie Renewable is negotiating to sell the plant's electricity to Penelec/First Energy Corp., according to Gatto.

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